MINUTES

RFL BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Location	RFL, Gate 13, Rowsley Street, Etihad Campus, Manchester, M11 3FF	**Date & Time**	Monday 29th June 2026, 10.30 - 13:30
Present	Nigel Wood OBE (NJW), Dermot Power (DP), Lord Jonathan Caine (JC), Emma Rosewarne MBE (ER), Sara Symington (SS), Martin Coyd OBE (MC), Rhodri Jones (RJ)	**Chair**	Nigel Wood OBE
Observers	Jo Drapier (JD), Ed Mallaburn (EM) (online)		
In attendance	Robert Graham (RG) (agenda items 5.0, 7.0 & 10.0), Marc Lovering (ML) (agenda items 5.2, 12.0), Robert Hicks (RH) (agenda items 7.0 & 8.0), Alison O'Brien (AO) (Meeting Secretary)		
Apologies	None		

Item No		Agenda Item	Who
1.0		**WELCOME & APOLOGIES** NJW welcomed everyone to the meeting. No apologies were received and full Board attendance was noted.	
2.0		**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** No additional declarations of interest were raised beyond those already recorded.	
3.0		**MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING AND ACTION TRACKER** The minutes of the meeting held on 18 May 2026 were reviewed and approved as an accurate record. RJ took the Board through the Action Tracker and progress was reviewed across governance, compliance, salary cap regulations, Challenge Cup planning, France strategy, RL Commercial initiatives, central distributions, and Rugby League Cares athlete-support policies. There was discussion on the COVID loan position, engagement with government stakeholders, creating a broader strategic funding proposal for rugby league, and positioning the sport as a key northern social-impact sport.	

		Board members debated player agents, regulatory controls, financial transparency, tax treatment, and potential tightening of the regulatory framework governing agents. NJW asked the Executive to undertake work in this area. DP asked the discussions around tax and IR35 be referred to the Audit & Risk Committee. Board were made aware that Mazars were currently undertaking some work to produce a document on tax related matters for clubs.	**RJ/RH** **DP/RG**
4.0		**MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES** ER asked for an update on the review of the trend of Unacceptable Language And Behaviour (ULAB) cases. AO committed to picking this up with the compliance team and providing an update. NJW asked the Executive to develop a government engagement strategy regarding Covid loan discussions and wider investment proposal.	**AO** **RJ**
5.0		**FINANCIAL MATTERS** The Board reviewed an improved financial forecast. Discussion included DCMS loan repayments, staffing cost savings, England programme costs, legal/regulatory resourcing, budget discipline and forecasting accuracy. The Board asked RG to provide clarification of approval/sign-off limits for significant contractual commitments and settlements. The Board discussed the current budget deficit in the area of Education and outlined plans to streamline courses, expand online delivery, and develop additional education opportunities. The Board discussed the coach education function, projected losses, proposed restructuring, revenue opportunities, course pricing, and debated balancing financial sustainability with investment in coaching quality and behavioural standards within the community game. NJW reiterated an emphasis on stronger forecasting and financial control explaining that the RFL currently had little commercial volatility risk associated with Rugby League Commercial and as such delivery against the agreed budget was much more with managements capability.	**RG**
6.0		**RECAPITALISATION & BROADCAST UPDATE** RJ provided an update which included an opportunity for the Board to review the Northern Hemisphere Strategy document developed with Deloitte. It was noted that the document could be a blueprint for other audiences. Discussions covered potential investment, governance implications, growth priorities, international development, pathways, club development, women's and wheelchair rugby league, and possible loan/equity structures. The Board debated funding models versus private equity and long-term sustainability.	**RJ**

		RJ provided an update on recent broadcast discussions. He outlined a focus on increasing competition, rights value, production support, digital content, and future distribution strategies. The Board discussed production costs, content strategy, French market opportunities, Super League Plus and content monetisation opportunities. The Board reviewed options for increasing rights value and future content distribution models.	
7.0		**REGULATORY UPDATE** The Board discussed disciplinary processes, the match review panel, consistency of sanctions, serious tackle incidents, player safety, education, transparency and future process improvements. RH informed Board that a review of match review panel operations, appeals, education work and public perception issues was underway and it was hoped this would be completed by the end of August. The Board reviewed ruck speed trends, intervention levels, game length statistics, captain's challenge performance, broadcaster impacts on decision making, and opportunities to improve the spectator experience. RH confirmed there had been positive feedback on goal kick shot clock implementation.	**RH**
8.0		**GRADING & CLUB MATTERS** The Board discussed grading and potential outcomes in 2026. There was discussion around Super League composition scenarios and governance risks associated with grading outcomes. The Board discussed the emerging issue surrounding London Broncos, who despite being unbeaten in the Championship and revitalised under new ownership remain unlikely to achieve the grading score required for Super League entry in 2027, having not delivered improvements across key off-field grading pillars. While modelling demonstrates that a Championship club could achieve a score sufficient for a place in Super League in 2027, London have not engaged with or progressed the areas needed to do so. NJW noted that the situation represents, in his view, an existential threat to the credibility of the RFL Board and one that was clearly foreseeable last year. It was agreed that reviews of progress against plans submitted by the 13th & 14th teams admitted to Super League in 2026 would be undertaken. RH and RJ led discussions on several clubs covering ownership, investment, special measures, financial sustainability, membership, operational risks and future participation.	

9.0		**GOVERNANCE MATTERS, SPORT ENGLAND GAP, AND CEO RECRUITMENT** AO outlined to Board the ongoing work on governance which includes sub-committees review, proposed Articles update, and production of the 2025 Annual Report. For timing reasons proposed Articles updates were covered in a separate core Board call held in between the scheduled Board meetings. The Board agreed to the recommendation to schedule the next Board Skills Matrix and Effective Board Performance Review for January 2027. The Board reviewed outstanding Sport England governance actions, which are all linked to the appointment of a CEO. NJW confirmed that the preferred CEO candidate had accepted an offer subject to completion of onboarding and formal processes. JD asked for the Nomco process and minutes of meetings for the recruitment of the CEO to be documented. RFL to provide Sport England with a letter of CEO appointment confirming a place on the RFL Board in an ex-officio capacity once the recruitment process is complete.	**AO** **AO**
10.0		**INTERNATIONAL RUGBY LEAGUE** There was a discussion of ongoing IRL matters. The Board discussed World Cup participation arrangements and tournament planning. AO updated Board on the current ERL governance position including future funding challenges and governance options. The Board considered broader international relationships, review of relationships with international stakeholders and long-term governance implications.	
11.0		**STAFFING PLAN** This agenda item will be covered by a paper to be circulated to Board by RJ post the meeting.	**RJ**
12.0		**RFL COMMUNITY TRUST** This agenda item will be covered by a copy of slides to be circulated to Board post the meeting.	**AO**
13.0		**BOARD SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES** Board noted the circulation of minutes from the Audit & Risk Committee meeting held on 14 May 2026.	
14.0		**RISKS** No new risks recorded in the meeting. Risk registers to be kept up to date.	**RG**
15.0		**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**	

		DP noted that the outstanding Sport England payment had been made promptly following the last Board meeting and thanked JD for her support in helping to resolve and improve cashflow.	
16.0		**DATE OF NEXT MEETING** Board discussed that the next meeting is currently scheduled for Monday 21st July 2026. As that is the day before the now scheduled AGM & Council meeting the Board agreed to move the next RFL Board meeting to Tuesday 22nd July to follow the AGM & Council meeting at Wakefield.	**AO**